

A N

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E S S A Y
O N
R E A S O N.

*Cælestis RATIONIS opus deducere mundo
Aggredior —*

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THE SECOND EDITION.



L O N D O N :

Printed by J. Wright for LAWTON GILLIVER
at *Homer's Head* against St. Dunstan's Church in
Fleetstreet, M.DCC.XXXV. Price 1 s.

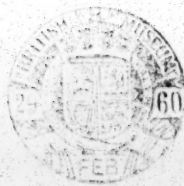
ESSAY

ON

REASON

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE
HUMAN MIND

BY J. W. B. JON



TO V D O N

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1860



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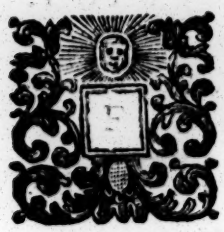
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A N
E S S A Y
O N
R E A S O N.



FROM Time's vast Length, eternal and un-
known,
Effence of God, coeval REASON shone;*
Mark'd each recess of Providence and Fate,
Weighing the present, past, and future state:
'Ere Earth to start from Nothing was decreed, 5
'Ere Man had fal'n, or God vouchsaf'd to bleed!

Part of *Herself* in *Eden's* pair she saw,
Where Virtue was but practice, Nature law:

* Est quidem vera Lex, recta RATIO, naturæ congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna. Huic legi nec promulgari fas est, neque derogari ex hac aliquid licet, neque tota abrogari potest..... Nec erit alia Romæ, alia Athenis, alia nunc, alia posthac. Sed omnes Gentes, & omni tempore una Lex, & sempiterna, & immutabilis continebit. Tull. de Rep. L. 3. preserv'd by Lactant. L. 3. c. 6

DEUS, & RATIO quæ cuncta gubernat. Manil. L. 2.

B

Where

Where Truth was almost felt as well as seen,
 (Perception half) and scarce a mist between: 10
 Where homage strove in *praise* and *pray'r* t'adore,
 By one to honour, and by one implore;
 While Temp'rance cropt the herb, and mixt the bowl,
 And health warm'd sense, and sense sublim'd the soul.

Fear was not then; nor malady, nor age; 15
 Nor publick hatred, nor domestick rage; —
 No fancy'd want, no lust of taste decreed
 The honest ox to groan, the lamb to bleed:
 No earth-born Pride had snatch'd th' Almighty's rod,
 O'erturn'd the balance, or blasphem'd the God; 20
 No Vice, (for vice is only truth deny'd)
 Nurs'd Ignorance, or Nature's voice bely'd.

Hail blissful pair! whose sense if farther wrought,
 Had weaken'd, stretch'd, and agoniz'd the thought:
 Created both to know and to possess 25
 What we, unhappy, can but barely guess;
 Truth to survey in clearest lights arrang'd,
 'Ere frauds were form'd to rules, or words were
 'Ere ev'ry act a double aspect bore, [chang'd,
 Or doubts, intending well, perplext us more. 30

You

You saw the *Source* of actions and the *End* :
 Why things are opposite, and why they blend ;
 How from eternal causes good and ill
 Subsist ; how mingle, yet are diff'rent still.
 How *Modes* unnumber'd soften and unite ; 35
 How strength of falshood glares, and strength of light.

Half of the God came open to your view :
 You hail'd his presence, and his voice you knew :
 That God, whose light is Truth, whose vast extent
 Of pleasure, Good — self-form'd and self-content!
 Unhurt by years, unlimited by place, 41
 At once o'erflowing Time, and Thought, and Space !

By knowing him, you knew him to be *Best* :
 (For the first Attribute infers the rest,)
 Knew from his Mind why boundless Virtue rose, 45
 Why his unerring Will that virtue chose,
 Not something sep'rate (as the Deist dreams)
 To circumscribe his pow'r, contract his schemes ;
 For *Reason*, tho' it binds th' immortal will,
 Is but a portion of the Godhead still ;* 50
 This learn, ye Wits, by sacred myst'ry aw'd,
 And know, that God is only guide to God ! †

This

* Quod quæris, DEUS est — Manil. L. 4.

† Ille, Legis hujus Inventor, Disceptator, Lator. Tull. de Rep. preserv'd by Lact.

This the *First* knew, their heart, their knowledge
 Their reason perfect, as their frame could bear; [clear,
 Till lust of change and more than mortal pride 55
 Infring'd the law, the penalty defy'd:
 Curst by themselves in *Eden's* blest abodes,
 Possessing all, yet raging to be Gods:
 Thence Sin unnerv'd the sense, obscur'd the soul,
 And still encreas'd, like rivers as they roll: 60
 For Nature once deprav'd, like motion crost,
 Ne'er of her self can gain the Pow'rs she lost.

But here the moderns eagerly dispute, —
 “ Why in a state of knowledge absolute,
 “ (Where unmixt truth came naked to the view, 65
 “ And the first glance could pierce all nature thro':)
 “ God should an *Edict positive* decree
 “ And guard so strict th' *invulnerable Tree*?
 “ This were, for *trifles*, *sagely* to contend,
 “ To barter *truth* for *show*, for *means* the *end*. 70

Agreed: But first our mighty sect shou'd prove
 God has no Title to our faith or love: *
 To awe submissive, reverential fear,
 To hope, to homage, to the grateful tear;

That

* 'Αὐτὸ μὲν γὰρ τὸ ΘΕΙΟΝ ΑΝΕΝΔΕΕΣ, αἱ δὲ ΤΙΜΑΙ τῆς ΗΜΕΤΕΡΑΣ ΩΦΕΛΕΙΑΣ
 ἐνεκα γίγνονται. Salut de Deo, c. 15.

That truth omniscient may sometimes deceive,
 That all-wise bounty knows not what to give ;
 First let the Critics of the Godhead make
 Such Theorems clear, and then this Answer take. 80

That *Adam*, tho' all Moral truth he saw,
 Yet scarce a Motive had t'infringe *that* Law :
 How could he honour other Gods than one?
 How change a spirit into sculptur'd stone?
 How, the first morning Life inform'd his frame, 85
 Durst he profane his Maker's sacred name !
 How without Parents could intemp'rate rage,
 Spurn the hoar head, or mock the tears of age?
 Why should he covet? when supremely blest —
 Or why defraud? When all things he possest — 90
 The bridal Bed for whom should he deceive?
 Or whom assassin, but his much-lov'd *Eve*? —
 Hence 'twas that man by *Positives* was try'd ;
 And hence behold the Godhead justify'd.

Add, that the *Reasoning Faculty* of man 95
 Serv'd not as now, when *Adam* first began:
 Much tho' he *saw*, yet little had he *try'd*,
 Nor known *Experience*, Nature's surest guide :

See then, a previous cause and reason giv'n
 Why a *Reveal'd Instinct* should come from heav'n, 100
 Which op'd at once the natures and the powr's
 Of earth, air, sea, beasts, reptiles, fruits, and flow'rs —
 Effects, as yet un-caus'd, *thence Adam* knew,
 The rage of poisons, and the balms of dew:
 Smil'd when the gen'rous courser paw'd the plains, 105
 Yet shun'd the tygres, and her beauteous stains:
 Nurst the soft Dove that slumber'd on his breast,
 Nor touch'd the *Dipsas*' poison-flaming crest.

How had he trembled in that blest abode,
 Had not his Sov'reignty been taught by God? 110
 Or how, unlicens'd, durst he wanton, tread
 Ev'n the green Insect in its herbal bed?
 For Life, like Property, is no man's slave,
 And only He can reassume, that gave. 115

[This by the way:] The history of the Fall,
 And how the first-form'd loins contain'd us all,
 Dread points! which none explain, and few conceive,
 We wave for ever, Doctors, by your leave.
 Ethnics and Christians a *Corruption* grant; 120
 The *Manner How*, still wicked Wits may want.

So,

So, if they doubt what, Sound, or Vision be?
Thence let 'em prove we cannot hear, nor see!—

'Spite of their Mock'ry also, plain is this,
That no man had a plea to *Adam's* blifs.
Grant that the Parent wastes a vast Estate — 125
Is he for that, just object of our hate,
Provided all remains that Use requires,
Or Need can crave, for Ends and for Desires?
To point out Evil, Virtue's heights to reach,
This life to soften, or the next to teach? 130

Shall Man, because he wants a Seraph's flame,
Not taste the Joys proportion'd to his frame?
Knowledge enough for Use, for Pride is giv'n;
Strong, but not *Sensitive* as truth in heav'n;
Clear, yet adapted to the mental Sight; 135
For too much truth o'erpow'rs as too much light.

REASON, like Virtue in a Medium lies;
A hairs-breadth more might make us *mad* not *wise*,
Out-know ev'n Knowledge, and out-polish Art,
Till *Newton* drops down giddy — a *Descartes*! 140
For *Reason* like a King who thirsts for Pow'r,
Leaves Realms unpeopled, while it conquers more —

Admit

Admit our eye-sight, as the *Lynx's*, clear ;
 T'attain the distant, we o'ershoot the near :
 [For Art too nice, like Tubes reverst, extends ¹⁴⁵
 Things beyond things, till ev'n the object ends.]
 Hence Nature, like *Alcides*, saw 'twas fit
 To fix th' extremest stretch of human *Wit* :
Wit, like an Insect clamb'ring up a ball,
 Mounts to one point, and then of course must fall, ¹⁵⁰
 No wiser, if its pains proceed, than end,
 And all its Journey only to descend !

The Question is not therefore, how much light
 God's Wisdom gives us, but t'exert it right :
 Enough remains for ev'ry social End, ¹⁵⁵
 For practice, theory, self, neighbour, friend :
 Then call not Knowledge narrow, Heav'n unkind,
 One Curse there is, 'tis Wantonness of Mind. —
 No human Plummets can Abysses found ;
 Agreed ; yet rocks they reach and shelving ground ;
 Thus Reason, where 'tis dang'rous, steers us right, ¹⁶⁰
 And then dissolves amidst the Abyss of Light.

'Tis *Reason* finds th' Horfizon's glimm'ring line
 Where realms of Truth and realms of Error join :

Views

Views its *own* Hemisphere with thankful eyes, 165
 Thinks Nature good in *that* which she denies;
 While Pride amidst the vast abrupt must soar —
 Alas, to fathom God is to be more!

Then dare be wise, into thy self descend,
 Sage to some purpose, studious to some end; 170
 Search thy own heart, the *Well* where knowledge lies;
 Thence (not from higher earth) we catch the skies;
 Leave *Mystry* to the Seraph's purer thought
 Which takes in Truth, as forms by streams are caught:
 Leave Lust to brutes whose unhurt sense is such, 175
 That ten fold transport thrills at ev'ry touch:
 Holding the middle sphere where Reason lies,
 Than *these* more temp'rate, as than *those* less wise.
 Each pow'r of Animals in each degree,
 Ev'n second Instict, Knowledge is to thee: 180
 Th' effect as certain, tho' the birth more slow,
 For like the Rose it must expand and blow:
 Time must call forth the manhood of the mind; †
 By study strengthen'd and by taste refin'd:

* *Ἐνδον βλέπει, Ἐνδον ἢ ΠΗΓΗ τῆς ἀθανάτου, &c.* M. Anton. L. 7.

† Præterea gigni pariter cum corpore, & una
 Crescere sentimus (pariterque senescere) mentem.
 Inde ubi robustis adolevit viribus ætas,

Consilium quoque majus, & auctior est animi Vis. Lucret. L. 3

D

Its

Its Action open, as its Purpose true, 185
 Slow to resolve, but constant to pursue;
 Weeded from passion, prejudice, and pride,
 Mod'rate to all, yet steady to one side.

Such once was KNIGHT: In word, in action clear;
 Ev'n in the last recess of thought sincere; 190

Great Grace without Titles, Virtuous without Show,
 Learn'd without Pride, and Just without a Foe;
 Alike Humane, to pity, or impart;
 The coolest head, and yet the warmest heart.

O early lost! With ev'ry Grace adorn'd! 195

By me, (so Heav'n ordains it) always mourn'd;
 In Life's full joy, and Virtue's fairest bloom
 Untimely check'd, and hurry'd to the Tomb:
 Torn ev'n from Her whom all the world approv'd,
 More Blest than man, and more than man Belov'd!

How few, like thee, truth's arduous paths can tread,
 Trace her flow streams, and taste them at their head?
 See how scarft sages, and pale schoolmen roam
 From Art to Art, their Mind a Void at home.
 For oft our Understanding apes our eyes, 205
 Forgets itself, tho' all things it descries.

Minds

Minds like true Pictures are by distance prov'd,
And Objects proper, only is remov'd. —

Yet *Reason* has a fund of charms t'engage,
Art, study, meditation, youth, and age: 210
Beauty which must the Slave, the Monarch strike,
Homage which paid not injures both alike;
Virtue at once to please and to befriend,
(Great Nature's clue, observant of its end)
Such were the paths the rubric Antients trod, 215
The friends of Virtue, and the * friends of God.

Science like this, important and divine,
The good man offers *Reason*, at thy shrine:
Sees *Thee*, *God*, *Nature*, (well explain'd) the same: †
Not chang'd when thought on, varying but in name;
Sees whence each *aptitude*, each *diff'rence* springs,
How thought ev'n *acts* and meaning *lives* in things:
Or else examines at less studious hours
The Thinking Faculty, its source, its powr's:
How, stretch'd like *Kneller's* canvas first it lies 225
'Ere the soft tints awake, or outlines rise:

* Wisd. of Sol. c. vii. v. 27.

† Quid enim aliud est *Natura* quam *Deus* & *Divina Ratio* toti mundo,
& partibus inserta? SENECA.

How,

How, till the Finishing of thrice seven years,
 The Master-Figure *Reason* scarce appears:
 Sighs to survey a Realm by right its own,
 While *Passion*, [fierce co-heir] usurps the throne ; 230
 A second *Nero*, turbulent in sway,
 His Pleasure, Noise ; his Life one stormy Day ;
 Headstrong in love, and headstrong too in hate,
 Resolv'd t'enlave the Mob, or sink the State ;
 Sad farce of pow'r, sad anarchy of things, 235
 Where brutes are subjects, and where tyrants kings.

Yet in this infant state, by stealth, by chance,
 Th' increasing mind still feels a slow advance,
 Thro' the dark Void ev'n gleams of Truth can shoot,
 And love of Liberty upheave at root. 240

No more the tender feeds unquicken'd lie,
 But stretch their form and wait for wings to fly :
Sensation first, the groundwork of the whole,
 Deals ray by ray each image to the soul :
Perception true to ev'ry nerve receives 245
 The various impulse, now exults, now grieves !
Thought works and ends, and dares afresh begin ;
 So whirlpools pour out streams, and suck them in ;
 That

That *Thought* romantic *Memory* detains
 In unknown cells and in aerial chains ; 250
Imagination thence her flow'rs translates,
 And *Fancy* emulous of God, creates:
Experience slowly moving next appears,
 Wise but by habit, judging but from years ;
 Till *Knowledge* comes, a wife and gen'rous heir, 225
 And opes the Reservoir averse to spare :
 And, *Reason* rises, the *Newtonian* Sun,
 Moves all, guides all, and all sustains in one,
 Bright Emanation of the Godhead hail,
 Fountain of living lustre, ne'er to fail ; 260
 As none deceiving, so of none deceiv'd : *
 Beheld, and in the act of *Sight* believ'd,
 In Truth, in Strength, in Majesty array'd,
 No Change to turn thee, and no Cloud to shade !
 Such in *her self* is REASON — : Deist say, 265
 What hast thou here t'object, t'explain away ?
 Think'it thou *thy Reason* this unerring Rule ? †
 Then live a madman — and yet die a fool !

* At neque decipitur Ratio, neque decipit unquam. MANIL.

† *Ratio* Diis Hominibusque communis: hæc in illis consummata est, in nobis consummabilis. SENECA. Epist.

God gave us *Reason* as the Stars were giv'n,
 Not to discard the Sun, but mark out Heav'n; 270
 At once a Rule of Faith, if well employ'd,
 A Source of Pleasure, if aright enjoy'd,
 And Point, round which th' eternal error lies
 Of *fools* too credulous, and *wits* too wise;
 A faithful guide to comfort and to save, 275
 Till the Mind floats, like *Peter* on the wave:
 Then bright-ey'd *Hope* descends, of heav'nly birth,
 And *Faith*, our Immortality on Earth,
 A *Saviour* speaks! lo darkness low'rs no more,
 And the husht billows sleep against the shore. 280
 If this be hardship, let the dying heir
 Spurn back his father's aid, and curse his care?
 If this be cruel, partial, or unwise,
 Then perish infidel, and God despise!

Nor flows it hence, that *Revelation's* force 285
 Chains Reason down, or thwarts it in its course:
 Since *Obligation*, first of Moral ties
 Binds thus, and yet no Tyranny implies:
 We grant that men th' eternal motive see,
 Yet motive, where there's choice, still leaves them free:

True

True *Liberty* was ne'er by *License* gain'd, 291
 Nor are Liege-subjects Slaves because restrain'd;*
 Restriction *shows* the check, but none *creates*;
 So Prescience finds, but not necessitates.

Yet still the Wits with partial voice exclaim, 295
 What art thou Truth? what Knowledge? but a name.
 In short, are Mortals free, or are they bound?
 Tell us, is Reason something, or a sound.

Friends 'tis agreed: Behold the gen'rous part,
 My soul at once unfolded, and my heart; 390
 Too brave to be by Superstition aw'd,
 And yet too modest to confront the God;
 Chain'd to no int'rest, bigot to no cause,
 Slave of no hope, preferment, or applause!
 For those who cleave to Truth for Virtue's sake, 305
 Enjoy all party-good, yet nothing stake.

Thou then, O Source of uncreated Light,
 Hallow my lips, and guard me whilst I write!

First in that *Pow'r*, [to whose eternal thought
 No outward object e'er one image brought, 310
 The part, the whole, the see-er and the seen,
 No distance, inference, or act between:]

R E A-

* Idcirco omnes Legum Servi sumus, ut liberi esse possimus. TULL.

REASON presides, diffusing thence abroad
Thro' truth, thro' things—the Test, the Point of God.*

As *perfect* Reason from the Godhead springs,
(And still unchang'd if *perfect* ;) so from *Things*, 316
Truths, *Actions*—in their kind and their degree
Starts *real meaning*, *difference*, *harmony*.†

These all imply a *Reason*, *Reason* still
A *Duty*, good if fought, if fought not, *ill* ; 320
Hence in the chain of causes, *Virtue*, *Vice*,
And thence *Religion*, take their gen'ral rise.

God first creates, the ref'ence, nature, force
Of things created must result of course ;
As well might Sense its evidence disclaim, 325
Or Chance sketch out Earth's, Heav'n's stupendous
As well might Motion to be Rest consent, [frame,
As well might Matter fill without extent,
As things (instead of being what they ought,)
Sink into hazard, whim, caprice, or nought. 330

* Deus totus, Ratio est. Senec. nat. quæst. L. 1

† Est profecto aliquid *Natura* pulchrum atque præclarum, quod *sponte sua* peteretur, quodque spreta & contempta voluptate, optimus quisque sequeretur. Tull. de Senect.

Quodque *Vere* dicimus, etiamsi a nullo laudetur, *Natura* est laudabile. Idem de Offic.

Etenim illud ipsum quod Honestum Decorumque dicimus *per se* nobis placet, animosque omnium *Natura* & *specie sua* commovet. Ibid. L. 2. c. 9.

* Ἐπεὶ δὲ ΑΓΑΘΟΝ ὃ ἄν' αὐτὸ Εἶναι ΕΝΕΚΑ ἢ αἰετὸν καὶ αὐταρχές. Arist. Rhet. c. 6.

Hence

Hence in each art the Great, the Glorious warms,
 For Science only copies Moral Charms, *
 Myfterious excellence! the dome, the draught,
 The lay, the confort swell upon the thought.

The Mind to nobler beauty thence proceeds, 335
 The union, colouring, and force of deeds;
 Swells in the hero's cause with vast esteem,
 Pants for the Patriot, and would more than seem.
 Labours with *Brutus* in the stern Decree,
 Yet whispers 'midst his tears, *O Rome be free!* 340
 Envies at *Utica* the Stoic sword,
 Or bleeds at *Carthage*, Martyr to its word! †

These truths congenial, nor devis'd tho' found,
 Live in each age, and shoot from evr'y ground:
 Bloom or on *Albion's*, or on *India's* coast, 345
 Midst *Abissinia's* flames, or *Zembla's* frost.

“ Yet still the ‡ Wits and || Moralists exclaim
 “ That Virtue's casual oft, and oft a name:

* Ita quod non potest in *Veritate* fieri, id [Antiqui] non putaverunt, in imaginibus factum, posse *certam Rationem* habere. Omnia enim *certa proprietate* & a *veris Naturæ deductis Moribus* traduxerunt in operum perfectiones, & ea probaverunt quorum explicationes in Disputationibus *Rationem* possunt habere Veritatis. Vitruv. L. 4. c. 2. See also Arist. Poetics c. 23.

† Atil. Regulus. Horat. L. 3. Ode 5. ‡ Le Mothe le Vayer; son Opuscule Sceptique. || Locke's *Human Understand.* 1. c. 3.

“At *Esperanza's* Cape (or Jesuits lie)

“Their Baptism's Urine, and their God a Fly; 350

“Old *Cato* sagely vers'd in Stoic Laws,

“Still hackney'd out his Wife to serve the Cause,

“And *Incest*, for th' Advantage of a Nation

“Was sacred made by *Spartan* Toleration:

“Midst *Tart'yr's* Defarts, and *Cathaya's* Sands, 355

“In their Horse-scoop the natives wash their hands,

“One drop of urine in their chamber spilt

“Is certain death, inexpiable guilt! *

“For a huge Whore, see Heroes, Kings, at strife;

“But never Virgin there was made a Wife.” † 360

Of all Assertions, these indeed are chief
 T' excite compassion, tho' not shake belief;
 Since from an agent's want of taste or skill,
 It flows not that the rule must needs be ill;
 For Truth exists abstracted from the mind, 365
 And Nature's Laws are Laws, tho' man be blind,
 REASON at most, but imitates the Sun,
 To *each* is various, and to ALL is one:

* Voyages de Carpin.

† Histoire des Gherifs.

Perfect consider'd in *its self* 'tis true,
 And yet *imperfect* as exerted too: 370
 The *Mental Pow'r* eternal, equal, fixt,
 The *human act* unequal, casual, mixt —
 And if such dormant Reason bears no fruit,
 Dead in the branch, tho' real at the root,
 Defect and actual Ignorance are one, 375
 For uselefs Talents are the same as none;
 All men may catch the lights of truth 'tis true,
 But the great Question is, if all men do?

"Oh but, says one, if Reason comes from heav'n,
 "Nature, or God must deal the Blessing ev'n: 380
 Agreed: and in a prior sense they do;
 But still t' improve the gift devolves on you: *
 Reason in this respect I boldly say,
 (And so do thousands, school-men, church-men, lay-)
 No more is natural and inly-born 385
 Than love, or lust, or pride, or hate, or scorn:
 'Tis man's t' exert, exalt, subject, impart;
 Here lies the Honesty and here the Art.

* Semina in corporibus humanis divina dispersa sunt, quæ si bonus Cultor
 excipit, familia origini prodeunt. SEN. EPIST. 73.

'Tis his, t'improve good sense, but none create,
 Ty'd down to spend no more than his estate: 390
 To strike no notion out, no truth deduce,
 But just as nature sow'd the seeds for use.

This instance urg'd and drawn from mental pow'rs,
 Earth each day testifies in trees and flow'rs:
 Culture with skill, and science join'd with toil, 395
 Teach *Persia's* peach to bloom in *Albion's* foil,
 As truly nature's produce here, as there
 In its own sunshine and its spicy air. —
 For truth, like earth made barren by the fall,
 Just as men labour, tribute pays to all: 400
Plain, if kind Heav'n two blessings shall impart,
 A reasonable head, and upright heart:
 For plainness rises in a giv'n degree
 As men are honest, and as men can see;
Quarles may be harder to th' unletter'd clown 405
 Than *Hed'lin*, or *Bossu* to wits in town.
 What's Ethic to the true pains-taking man,
 Who never thinks and cheats but all he can?
 What's *Sh**ry's* hairs-breadth morals at the *Change*?
 Or *Tindal's* fitness at *Philemon's* Grange? 410

Or

Or solid Reas'ning to the headstrong youth,
His Tutor, Pain, Experiment his Truth?

In short, one sentence may the whole discuss —
As we with TRUTH, TRUTH coincides with us:
This boulds the matter fairly to the bran, 415
And nothing more wits, bards, deans, doctors can.

NATURE like God, ne'er felt the least decay;
But human nature has, and oft she may:
Full in the child th' unfinew'd fire appears,
More weak by growth, more infantine by years; 420
And ductile vice each new impression takes,
Passive as air, with ev'ry motion shakes.

Like some true *Roman* Dome Mankind appears,
The pile impair'd, but not o'erwhelm'd by years;
Ev'n the remains strength, beauty, use impart, 425
And, faint, or rough, are equal proofs of art:
Yet nothing but the first-creating hand
Shall fill the shadowy lines, or new command,
Bid the stretch'd roof to swell, the arch to bend,
The wings to widen, and the front extend! 430
Yet as true madmen, most their friends suspect;
So *Wits* for this, shall ev'n their God reject!

G

Not

Not that my verse *Right Reason* would controul,
 True Freedom limit, or contract the Soul;
 Th' exchange were one to bigotry from pride, 435
 A hairs-breadth serves to join them, or divide;
 Yet proper decencies must still be had,
 Not meanly pious we, nor vainly mad:
 Reason, like *Israel*, *Horeb's* place descries,
 But if she gazes wantonly, she dies; 440
 If well-attemper'd, her ethereal light
 Will fix our slippery steps, and gild our night:
 Or else at most we run a rash, career,
 Or fare like pilots, who by meteors steer;
 For, like a mark *she's* faithful to the view, 445
 But just as distance, force, and aim are true:
 Then guide, and judge, and guardian of our ways,
 Test of our deeds, and umpire of our praise,
 Source of our joy, and bound'ry of our grief,
 Anchor of hope, and pilot of belief! 450
 True to the clear, unbias'd, humble soul,
 Which trembling seeks her, as the steel its pole!
 Yet ah, how few ev'n antient times beheld,
 (When *Greece* and *Rome* in arms and arts excel'd)

Who

Who thro' life's maze the steps of Nature trod, 455
Reason their guide, and Truth their unknown God?
The *Stagyrite*, who bold to heav'n could soar,
Trembled at last to die, and be no more;
Gods, angels, glories op'd on *Plato's* view,
Yet judgment quench'd the flames which rapture blew:
Midst myriads, who but *Socrates* appears 461
The birth, pride, effort of three thousand years!

Nothing the rest, or worse than nothing meant,
God was but *Chance*, and Virtue but *Consent*,*
At best the Hero's was an impious name: 465
Free Patriots while they bled were slaves to fame;
Ev'n Hell was fable, and their blest abodes
Of Brutes a Synod, or a Mob of Gods!

What *Bramin* yet, what Sage of *Rome* or *Greece*
E'er form'd one moral System of a piece? 470
Or half an Altar rais'd, or Duty paid,
Unmix'd with rituals, homage, myst'ry, shade?
He therefore best infers who steers by fact,
And weighs not Reason's *Pow'r*, but Folly's *Act*:

* Non Philosophorum Judicia, sed delirantium somnia. Tull. de Nat.
Deor. D. 1.

Which of those godlike antients ever drew 375
 The Whole of Ethics justly round and true? *
 Had Mission or to prophecy or preach?
 Sanction t'excite, Authority to teach?
 Nay ev'n their *Rule* of Morals and of Life
 Was often wrong, various, oft at strife — 480
 'Gainst State or Priest they little durst impart,
 Their lips scarce breath'd the truths that scorch'd
 their heart:

Hence *Samos*' Sage the current faith advis'd,
 Hence *Plato* trim'd his Creeds, and temporiz'd,
 And *Greece* for † one man's head in holy rage, 485
 [A strange example in that *mod'rate* age]
 More Art employ'd, more Premiums issu'd forth,
 Than all our modern Deists heads are worth.

Nay half the source of most the antients knew,
 From *Noah* they, as He from *Eden* drew: 490
 Whence Truth in secret pipes to *Memphis* past,
 Thence strain'd thro' *Jewry* water'd *Asia* last.

* Veritatem & divinæ Religionis Arcanum Philosophi attigerunt, sed aliis
 refellentibus, defendere id quod invenerant, nequiverunt, quia singulis ratio non
 quadravit, nec ea, quæ vera senserant, in summam redigere potuerant. Lac-
 tant. de div. Præm.

† Diagoras.

So *Nilus* wanders mystic in its flow,
And Columns tost from *Tempé* feed the *Po*.

Now too, Wit's *Titans* spite of all their boast, 495
But combat God with his own arms at most:
The truths they boast of, and the rules they know,
Seen not, or own'd not, first from *Scripture* flow.
So painters us'd to copy, seem t'invent,
Of aid unconscius, and in theft content. 500

Faith strikes the light, but pride assumes the fame:
Sure, like th' oblig'd t'efface her Patron's name:

For as when vig'rous breezes drive a fleet, ^
Earth seems to stretch, & labouring floats in meet,
(Solid herself and fixt :) So here 'tis Thus; 505
Nor we to God, but God accedes to us.

For ah, ev'n *here* where life a journey runs,
Blest with new day-light and with nearer suns:
Virtue's dim lights by God's own hand supplied,
With Sanction strengthen'd, honour'd with a Guide,
How few (except instructed first and led) 511
Can thrid the Maze, or touch the Fountain's head?

* Qua vehimur navi, fertur, cum stare videtur:
Quæ manet in Statione, ea præter ereditur ire;
Et fugere ad puppim colles, campique videntur. LUCRET. L. 4.

Observe a Mean 'twixt Bigotry and Pride,
 Hit the strait way, or err not in the wide?
 If Reason then scarce finishes the Best, 515
 Th' unbias'd Few, how fares it with the Rest?
 Where *Error* holds at least a dubious sway,
 A war of thoughts, and twilight of a day ;*
 Where *Prepossession* warps the ductile mind,
 Where blindfold *Education* leads the blind : 520
 Where *Int'rest* biasses, *ill Customs* guide,
 And *strong Desires* pour on us like a tide,
 Where *Indolence* is never at a Loss,
 But saunters on to Heav'n, a Saint in gross:
 Where *Wit* must mince a Gnat (its throat so small :)
 Where *Ignorance* an Ostrich gorges all ; 526
 Where *Zeal* her unknown vow of fury keeps,
 And *Superstition* like an Idiot weeps ;
 Where *Persecution* lifts its iron rod,
 Bad for good ends, the butcher of the God : 530
 Where *Pride* still list'ning to herself appears,
 New forms earth's orbit, and new rolls the spheres,

* Homo non ut a Matre, sed ut a Noverca, Natura editus est in vitam . . . in quo tamen inest tanquam obrutus, quidam divinus Ignis ingenii & mentis. Tull. de Rep. L. 3. Preserv'd by St. Austin, Contr. Pel. L. 4.

Holds ev'n th' Almighty in her airy chain,
 Gives back his laws, well meant, but meant in vain:
 Its bravery at best a blund'ring hit, 535
 Its freedom treason, obloquy its wit ;
 Its vast request just purely to declaim,
 And the dear little license — to blaspheme ;—
 Say, can cool Virtue here dissuade from ill ?
 Or exil'd Reason — Pandar to the Will ? — 540
 At most a *Voice* or *Miracle* may save,
 And only *Terrors* snatch us from the grave !

Suppose [tho' we disown it oft to be]
 Man from these *Errors* and these *Passions* free ;
 Well taught by Art, by Nature well inclin'd, 545
 Steady of Judgment, tractable of Mind,
 The first step's his, (the giving folly o'er,)
 The last, to practice truth, is ten times more.

Ah me, what lengths of valley yet remain,
 What hills to climb, 'ere *Reason's* height he gain ? 550
 What strength to toil, what labour to pursue,
 Still out of reach, and often out of view !

Then gracious God, how well dost thou provide
 For erring Reason an unerring Guide !

To silence Explanation [Myſt'ry's foe,] 555
 To lead the tim'rous, and exalt the low ;
 Ev'n to the beſt, [as all are oft perplex]
 Inſtructive, as true Comments to a text.

Then let each hour's new whim the Witlings ſwell,
 Heav'n let 'em tutor, and extinguish hell: 560
 Refuſe to truſt Omnſcience on its troth,
 Yet take a lawyer's Word, or harlot's Oath ;
 Then Bigots, when 'gainſt Bigots they complain,
 And only *ſingular*, becauſe they're *vain*. *
 Grant none but they the narrow path can hit — 565
 When will two *Wits* allow each other *Wit* ?

Far other views the ſolid mind employ,
 A bounded proſpect, but a ſurer joy : —
 True Knowledge when ſhe conquers or abſtains,
 Like the true Hero, equal glory gains. 570
 This, this is Science, ſacred in its end,
 True to the views of heav'n, one's ſelf, and friend :
 The earlieſt ſtudy, as the lateſt care,
 The ſureſt refuge, and the only pray'r.

* Cæterum profana Philoſophiæ turba *imperitorum*, vana Sanctitudinis, priva veræ rationis, inops religionis, impos veritatis, ſcrupuloſiſſimo cultu, inſolentiſſimo ſpretu Deos negligit, pars in Superſtitionem, pars in contemptum, timida, vel tumuda. Apul de Deo Socr.

" O Thou, the God, who high in Heav'n presides,
 " Whose eye o'ersees me, and whose wisdom guides,
 " Deal me that Portion of Content and Rest,
 " That unknown Health, and Peace, which suit me best:
 " Save me from all the Guilt, and all the Pain,
 " That lust of pleasure brings, and lust of gain; 580
 " In Trial fix me, and in Peril shade,
 " 'Gainst Foes protect me, 'gainst my Passions aid;
 " In Wealth my guardian, and in Want my guide,
 " 'Twixt a mean Flattery, and drunken Pride:
 " With Life's more dear Sensations warm my heart,
 " Transport to feel, Benevolence t' impart, 586
 " Each homefelt Joy, each publick Duty send,
 " Make me, and give me, all things in the Friend!
 " But most protect and guard me in a Mind,
 " Not rashly bold, nor abjectly resign'd: 590
 " And oh, when Interest ev'ry Virtue hides,
 " When Error blinds, and Prejudice misguides,
 " Alike thy Grace, alike thy Truth impart,
 " Beam on my Soul, and triumph o'er my Heart!
 " Thus let me live unheard of, or forgot, 595
 " My wealth Content, praise Silence, truth my Lot;

"Thy *Word*, O God! my Science and Delight,
 "Task of my Day, and Transport of my Night:
 "There taught, that he who *suffers* is but *try'd*,
 "And he who *wanders*, still may find a guide, 600
 "Sanction with Truth, Reward with Virtue join'd,
 "Life without end, and Laws that reach the mind!
 "Happy the Man, that such a *Guide* can take,
 "Whose Character is, *never to forsake!*

*Desine quapropter novitate exterritus ipsa,
 Expuere ex animo Rationem, sed magis acri
 Judicio perpende, & si tibi vera videtur
 Dede manus, aut si falsa est, accingere contra.*

LUCRET. L. 2.





